CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 7 March 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Carl-Magnus Hyltenius (Sweden)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 586th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I wish to extend a warm welcome to the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, who is joining us today at this plenary meeting. The Under-Secretary-General is responsible for the substantive servicing of our Conference, and I wish to thank him for the interest he shows in our work, as well as for his outstanding support for the activities of the Conference.

I should like to note that tomorrow, 8 March, is International Women's Day, a date universally celebrated in recognition of the role of women in all fields of human endeavour. I take pleasure today in welcoming the participants in the women's conference dealing with the relationship between arms and the environment and I should like to extend to them, as well as to the women participating directly in the work of our own Conference, our warm congratulations on the occasion of their day, with which we fully associate ourselves. Every year, the Conference on Disarmament has joined in recognizing the importance of the role of women and has received the views of their organizations gathered together to discuss important world problems. The women's conference has addressed a message to us, which I shall request the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to read out for the information of delegations. I invite Ambassador Komatina to take the floor.

Mr. KOMATINA (Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): The statement addressed to the members of the Conference on Disarmament by the participants in the women's conference on the relationship between arms and the environment reads as follows:

"One year ago, we, the participants of the 8 March Women's Gathering, addressed you the members of the Conference on Disarmament, regarding the issues on the agenda before you in view of the dramatic changes in Europe, and our concerns for the health and environmental consequences of nuclear radiation from weapons production and testing. We were very pleased to note that during subsequent months, several of the Conference's members and non-members addressed these issues in their statements to this body, and to the partial test-ban Treaty Amendment Conference held in New York during January of this year.

"The Gulf war has underscored the importance for progress on the critical issues before this Conference. We wish to refer specifically to the need for the speedy conclusion of the convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and for their destruction, to the need for further progress in nuclear disarmament, and for the conclusion of a binding international instrument prohibiting attacks on nuclear facilities as potential radiological weapons.

(Mr. Komatina Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

"Recent events have also highlighted the importance of strengthening the non-proliferation Treaty. Towards this end, we view the realization of the goals expressed in the preamble and article VI of that Treaty - specifically the cessation of nuclear testing and nuclear disarmament - as fundamental to the preservation and strengthening of the Treaty beyond 1995. While we welcome the early re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, we urge the Conference to go beyond deliberations and to give this Committee a mandate to negotiate a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

"The Gulf war has demonstrated the enormous damage that weapons and war inflict upon the environment. Our meeting has conducted a case-study of the environmental impact of the war. While full information on the environmental consequences is not yet available and may take months or years to assess, many experts are predicting that the oil-well fires may take one to five years to extinguish, and that severe environmental problems will occur, undermining the basis for life in the region and beyond.

"With our world facing a serious ecological crisis, we are concerned that inadequate attention is paid to the real and potential environmental costs of all types of weaponry. Consequently, in our consultation this year we are examining the relationship between arms and the environment - from the mining of the world's resources for military purposes, through weapons production and testing, to military bases, maneouvres, to war. We welcome the plans to hold a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and we are urging United Nations Member States to include military issues on the agenda for this important meeting.

"We are deeply concerned for the future - for our children and for our planet. The goal of general and complete disarmament, endorsed by the United Nations first special session on disarmament in 1978, is not a utopian dream. It is a global imperative to build just relations and to release the resources necessary to respond to the ecological and developmental crises that threaten to steal the future.

"It is your responsibility to negotiate the disarmament agreements that will help to usher in a safe and secure future, free from the menace of weapons of mass destruction. Global relations must be based not on military force but on co-operation."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for reading out the statement addressed to us by the women's conference, and I should also like to wish the participants in the conference every success in their deliberations.

Before I proceed to our list of speakers for today, I wish to ask whether any delegation wishes to take the floor at this stage, in view of the statement we have just heard. I recognize the distinguished representative of France.

Mr. BESANÇENOT (France) (translated from French): I would like to make a brief statement on behalf of the group of Western countries, to welcome here today the participants in the meeting organized on the occasion of International Women's Day. We are aware of the important role played by women in non-governmental organizations working for peace and disarmament. We listened with great interest to the message they addressed to the Conference. The topic chosen this year - arms and the environment - is a particularly appropriate subject at a time when the Gulf conflict is coming to an end. The concern expressed with respect to the ecological disaster caused by pollution of the Gulf and the burning of Kuwaiti oil wells by Iraq is of course shared by our countries: such actions are utterly reprehensible.

The Gulf conflict thus demonstrated that, while arms can of course cause serious damage to the environment, nevertheless it is first and foremost the criminal conduct of certain leaders who flout international law that gives rise to the most serious impacts on our natural environment. The end of hostilities in the Gulf and the success of the actions taken by the international community united to enforce the elementary rules of law should therefore be welcomed as good news for the preservation of human lives, but also as good news for environmental protection. Indeed, measures are already being implemented to try to remedy the worst consequences of pollution in the region.

The year 1990 was a year of hope for all who aspire to a more peaceful world where human rights are respected. After the revolutionary changes we witnessed in 1989, especially in Europe, last year saw the finalization of an extremely important conventional disarmament agreement - the CFE Treaty - as well as the substantial strengthening of confidence-building and security-building measures in Europe. These agreements were made possible by positive changes in the situation in central and eastern Europe, and made it possible to lay the foundations for a new, more equitable order in the old continent. The CSCE summit formalized this new state of affairs in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Therefore we can only welcome this progress, and hope that the positive trends that have emerged in this way will be consolidated and built upon in the future. The example of such co-operation between yesterday's adversaries should be to the benefit of other regions of the world. And here we are thinking in particular of the Gulf region and the Middle East in general.

In other areas of arms control too, 1990 saw progress which we hope will rapidly lead to agreements: as regards START, concerning the nuclear weapons of the two major Powers; and as regards the chemical weapons negotiations, which are taking up the bulk of the efforts of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Gulf crisis, which involved a serious threat that chemical weapons would be used, showed us, if we needed to be shown, that there was an urgent need to achieve a universal ban on such arms. The Conference on Disarmament must therefore redouble its efforts to devise imaginative wording whereby the final very complex problems involved in such an agreement can be resolved. We are confident that with good will on all sides, it will be possible to finalize this convention in the near future, so as to strengthen security for all.

(Mr. Besancenot, France)

Outside the chemical field, the Conference must also continue to devote due attention to the important questions relating to nuclear weapons and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which are on its agenda. The group of Western countries, for its part, is determined to continue to make an active contribution to the negotiations and discussions under way in the Conference.

I would like to conclude by stressing how the presence of our guests today is an encouragement to us in our efforts. This earns them our warm gratitude.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): On behalf of the Group of 21 I should like to express our satisfaction at the presence in this plenary meeting of the participants in the women's conference. That conference highlights the importance of the role of women in priority areas that are germane to the very survival of the human being and the environment. In an ever more interdependent world, it appears increasingly difficult to separate security issues from those pertaining to the future of the individual and the planet. We are certain that the Conference being held on armaments and the environment will be a contribution that will make it possible to broaden world awareness of the importance of tackling these issues vigorously and urgently. We hope, as we did last year, to receive a report on its conclusions for careful analysis. In reiterating the gratitude of the Group of 21 to the women's conference, I would like on behalf of the Group to wish it every success in its discussions.

Mr. HOU (China) (translated from Chinese): International Women's Day is an important international festival. On this day 500 million Chinese women commemorate the event with women in the rest of the world. We are most pleased that on the eve of the festival the representatives of some international women's organizations are among us in this plenary. The Chinese delegation extends its welcome and warm greetings to them. We would also like to express our congratulations to all other women present here.

Arms control and disarmament is an important issue that has a bearing on the peace, security and happiness of the people of the world. This year, in line with the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its most recent session, we have started the Third Disarmament Decade. The tasks before us will be even more arduous, and the joint efforts of the international community, including the community of women, will be much needed.

Many international organizations and non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, have already made great contributions in this regard, and will play an even greater role. We would like to express our appreciation for their efforts and contributions.

Mr. GASPAR (Czechoslovakia): On behalf of the Group of East European and other States, I would like to join the previous speakers and also warmly welcome the representatives of the women's conference, as well as women in the

(Mr. Gaspar, Czechoslovakia)

delegations attending today's plenary meeting on Women's Day. It is a common feeling that the address that we listened to, as well as the forthcoming Conference, is very important and is an example of the activities of women's organizations towards strengthening peace and security in the world. It is an honour for my delegation to express our sincere congratulations on the eve of International Women's Day to mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, all women who make our lives more convenient, fine and beautiful. I wish the women present good health, a happy family life, success in their work, simply all the best.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Czechoslovakia for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? It seems not. Let us then proceed to our list of speakers for today. I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Australia and Peru. I now give the floor to the representative of Yugoslavia, Ambassador Calovski.

Mr. CALOVSKI (Yugoslavia): Mr. President, it is my particular pleasure to greet you, the representative of friendly Sweden, and to express my cordial congratulations on your resumption of this important and responsible function. I take the opportunity also to extend my cordial greetings to His Excellency Ambassador Rasaputram of Sri Lanka, who presided with great success over the first organizational phase of the work of our Conference. I extend my cordial greetings also to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Komatina, who is successfully executing his function of Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to welcome in our midst Under-Secretary-General Akashi, and I would also like to join the previous speakers who have eloquently spoken on the important role of the women's movement generally and particularly in the field of disarmament.

This session of the Conference opened under the shadow of the war in the Gulf, which has fortunately ended. Its cause lay in the amassing of arms which encouraged the belief that political and other aims - right through to aggression and annexation of a small non-aligned country - could be achieved through the use of force. The result, of course, was disastrous and proved once again that there is no rationality in the tendency to achieve political aims by military means. It is also unrealistic to expect that in the world of today peace and security can be preserved without a fundamental dialogue and without the reaching of permament solutions on a comprehensive basis for problems peoples and States are faced with.

It is well known that Yugoslavia was intensively engaged in efforts aimed at preventing the Gulf war on the basis of the principles of the Security Council resolutions. Once the war had broken out Yugoslavia engaged in efforts for its cessation and for the reinstatement of peace. Our activities were carried out within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations, in co-operation with the countries of the region and in continuous contact with directly involved or interested parties.

Yugoslavia welcomed with great relief the cessation of the war in the Gulf, the liberation of Kuwait and the reinstatement of its sovereignty and legitimate Government. This historic moment for the people of Kuwait is at the same time the victory of the aspirations of all the peoples and States in the world to freedom and peace.

(Mr. Calovski, Yugoslavia)

In this era when new and more just relations in the world are being created, the international community confirmed through its decisive action the unacceptability of a policy of aggression and the fait accompli, thus strengthening the possibilities and prospects for constructing a stable peace and security in the interest of all.

The Gulf countries and the entire international community, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, are now facing a great responsibility and obligation to remove all the grave consequences of war, to strengthen peace and security and to establish permanent stability in this region. This would create the indispensable conditions for initiating the process of finding a speedy solution to the Middle East crisis as a whole.

It is evident that the process of ending the cold war is a rather complex process. It is not enough to merely have a transformation from the top; it is also necessary to make a radical turn in the actual basis - in the concepts and understanding of what kind of balance in international relations we are really in need of. The thesis that the balance of power, and hence of fear, is the only sound basis for relations, obviously can no longer meet the reality of the contemporary world. A need for a balance of interests which would become the basis for new common values and motives is emerging.

There is no doubt that the recent positive developments have been strongly influenced by the successful bilateral negotiations between the United States and the USSR. The orientation toward dialogue and co-operation certainly nourishes the hope that bilateral undertakings - particularly in the field of disarmament - can be shifted into the multilateral field.

What is now emerging to the surface are precisely those important components of international security and co-operation which the policy of non-alignment has been striving for from its very beginning to the present day. What we can see is that non-alignment was never only an attitude towards the blocs but that it was and still is a policy and phenomenon with a much broader basis, a reaction to international relations that should be changed but also a platform offering changes. There is neither a unipolar nor a bipolar world. This awareness should stimulate all in taking up constructive and realistic stands in a joint effort to make the world a more peaceful and more secure place. In order to be closer to stability and prosperity based on coexistence, disarmament and a new integration on a democratic basis, it is necessary to take into consideration all the factors and relations in the world.

Disarmament is an integral part of all contemporary processes, and there is no doubt that positive changes in political relations accelerate the advances in this field too. Out of the collapse of a system based on the doctrine of military balance we are now closer than ever before to the creation of new foundations which should be based on a sound system of undiminished security for all. The time has come for a new concept of international security which should become a permanent value for international peace and stability, especially since the technological breakthroughs in the military field do not bring with them more security.

(Mr. Calovski, Yugoslavia)

This Conference is a representative negotiating body and it must efficiently and decisively approach the issue of accomplishing the tasks and aims set before it. The disarmament problems on the international agenda today are present more than ever before in the history of international relations - both a political and a negotiating process. A global approach should be adopted in all the disarmament fields - nuclear, chemical and conventional - and the positive results of negotiations achieved so far, particularly the results of bilateral negotiations between the United States and the USSR and those within the context of the CSCE, should stimulate the efforts of this Conference.

It is indisputable that the freeing of the world from the terror of arms of mass destruction is a priority task of this Conference. It is normal and justifiable that the complex of nuclear disarmament should be a priority agenda item of the Conference. There is no doubt that, for example, the halting of all nuclear tests is one of the most urgent goals to be reached within this Conference.

We support the bilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, but they cannot replace multilateral negotiations and agreements. A broad consensus has been reached on the need to have the negotiations on the prohibition of nuclear tests intensified at this very Conference, and we believe that in this respect there should be no hesitation, the more so since present scientific and technological knowledge and instruments make possible a high level of safety in matters of control and verification. Yugoslavia is of the opinion that a moratorium on nuclear tests by all nuclear Powers would facilitate the signing of a comprehensive agreement on their prohibition. The results of the Amendment Conference held in New York are well known, and we support the agreement that further efforts should be made within the Conference on Disarmament.

As regards the other priority of this Conference - chemical weapons - Yugoslavia's interest and, we can say, that of the entire Non-Aligned Movement, is to have a decisive step forward taken towards the adoption of a global and comprehensive convention. We are aware that a number of primarily political problems should be solved as soon as possible, since any fundamental advance in the negotiations on the convention depends on them. We would like to have these issues examined and decided upon at a special session of this Conference at ministerial level whenever it is considered that such a session could contribute to the adoption of the convention. We trust we all agree that a universal approach to the convention should be achieved - if possible before the entry into force of the convention. This is the main aim of the proposal Yugoslavia submitted at the last special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations devoted to disarmament, namely that immediately after agreement is reached on the convention a special conference should be convened under the auspices of the United Nations to enable all the member States of the United Nations to adopt and sign the convention.

It is very important that the convention should be an important and attractive enough instrument offering more security to all the signatories. I believe I share the opinion of all of you when I say that, when the convention enters into force, a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons, including the prohibition of use, should also enter into force. I hope it

(Mr. Calovski, Yugoslavia)

will not be an exaggeration if I say that in a political sense the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons was adopted two years ago in the Paris Declaration, which is one more reason why the prohibition in the convention should be formulated in such a manner as to eliminate chemical weapons once and for all, and why they should never, under any condition, be legalized again.

As regards the prevention of the arms race in outer space, this issue has emerged as most topical because of scientific and technological developments and the reasonable demand of the international community that space should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. We should not allow the arms race to spread into outer space as it is in the interest of all to have scientific and technological achievements in this endless space mostly used for solving basic living and developmental needs of man, especially in the developing countries. So far during the work of the Conference numerous proposals and initiatives have been submitted on expanding the legal system, on strengthening security, on greater transparency of space activities and on confidence-building measures. All of this we see as a valuable contribution to preventing the arms race in outer space. Since a growing number of countries are acquiring the technological capability for space activities, the multilateral character of these issues is becoming ever more significant.

In the context of overall development, there is a growing need for a complex approach to the problem of limiting the use of scientific and technological achievements for military purposes, as the requests and needs for orienting them towards peaceful purposes are being increasingly stressed and becoming increasingly justified. An unhindered approach to having these achievements used for peaceful purposes is of fundamental importance for economic development, and this was rightfully stressed in Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar's message to the Conference at the inauguration of this session.

For several years now this forum has been dealing with multilateral as well as bilateral efforts for ending the arms race and for disarmament. Yugoslavia has no dilemma: in the disarmament process every effort is welcome, regardless of whether it is unilateral, bilateral, regional or a universal undertaking contributing to the accomplishment of a goal we are all aiming at - a world without nuclear or other arms of mass destruction, a world with minimal stocks of conventional arms of a purely defensive character, a world of maximum security with a minimum of armaments. Until this aim is reached, Yugoslavia will support efforts in the field of disarmament, on whatever level, or in whatever part of the world.

We are convinced that the potentials emerging from the present relations in the world, as well as from the changes in the societies in many countries, are much greater than is reflected in the negotiations. In order to move faster we should not wait for the concessions of others but we should all together, with more courage, enter into relations of interaction and negotiations. It is obvious that at the end of the cold war the need for fundamental and responsible talks and decisions on disarmament measures has been intensified - less and less within a narrow circle of States, but rather as a collective effort in the construction of a new balance of interests, values and motives, in which this Conference has a role and significance that cannot be avoided.

(Mr. Calovski, Yugoslavia)

Before I conclude I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the following with regard to the statement delivered at this Conference two weeks ago by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Mr. Géza Jeszenszky, on the issue of the illegal arms deal between Hungary and Yugoslavia, since a number of representatives in this Conference have expressed the wish to be adequately informed.

The illegal export of arms from Hungary to Yugoslavia was the subject of intensive communications between the two Governments. The Yugoslav Government asked for a thorough investigation with the aim of establishing the real state of affairs. The first reaction of the Hungarian side was to deny any connection with the illegal arms deal. The Yugoslav side could not accept that position, since it had proof to the contrary, and qualified the arms deal as an infraction of Yugoslav sovereignty, an interference in its internal affairs and an action contrary to international law and the principles and the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the CSCE.

Later the Hungarian Government, at the beginning of February 1991, issued two statements acknowledging the arms deal but minimizing its scope and significance. In response to this, the Yugoslav side repeated the expectation that an investigation would be carried out and that the Hungarian Government would establish the real facts and provide adequate information, offering explanations and accepting responsibility.

At Hungary's initiative, State Secretary Katona then paid a visit to Belgrade. He presented an official note in which, among other things, the Hungarian side expressed its regret at not having provided the Yugoslav side with detailed information, and at the public statements made before the actual investigation was carried out. In these talks it was established on the basis of the official Hungarian presentation that the illegal arms deal was not a routine trade transaction on the part of a Hungarian export company, nor could trade liberalization have been an excuse for what was, as a matter of fact, a very large illegal export of arms to Yugoslavia. It was also established that the deal violated the agreement between the two countries on mutual arms deals, military equipment deals and the sale of technology which explicitly states that such business may be carried out only between the two Governments, or by organizations and institutions so authorized by the two Governments.

It is now clear that the arms were sold with the approval of the Hungarian Government, and that the Yugoslav Government was deliberately kept in the dark. In the opinion of the Yugoslav Government this matter cannot be treated as an administrative mistake but as a political problem which touches upon the sovereign interests of Yugoslavia.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Yugoslavia for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Hungary, Ambassador Tóth.

Mr. TOTH (Hungary): Mr. President, this is not the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, since the Foreign Minister of Hungary had the opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament recently. Still, I would like to express my personal satisfaction

(Mr. Tóth, Hungary)

at seeing you preside over our Conference. I am sure that your able guidance will lead us to progress in resolving the problems ahead of us. I would like as well to welcome most cordially Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, whose presence in the Conference on Disarmament is always a moral support for us in our endeavours to meet the multifaceted challenges in the field of disarmament. At the same time I would like to convey our heartfelt welcome and congratulations to the members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the participants in the annual women's gathering present in the meeting room, and also our lady colleagues on the eve of International Women's Day.

The most recent meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organization took place on 25 February 1991 in Budapest. As a part of the traditional task of the host country I have the honour to present to the Conference on Disarmament the "Statement of the member States of the Warsaw Treaty" contained in document CD/1071. We are convinced that this is a statement of historic importance. It reflects the decision that, bearing in mind the fundamental changes in Europe, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, acting as sovereign and equal States, have decided to dismantle the military organs and structures of the Treaty by 31 March 1991. Speaking on behalf of the Republic of Hungary, let me share with you the views of my Government on the occasion of this event.

It will probably be a formidable task for a generation of historians to reveal the place and role of the Warsaw Treaty in the last 35 years. It might be extremely difficult at this stage to arrive at common evaluations. At the same time, we have an urgent task to face today's challenges and even the questions of tomorrow. Therefore, the major direction in which we must concentrate our efforts is to create a new form and structure of relations that comply with democratic requirements and respect sovereignty in the field of disarmament as well.

After more than half a century, a Europe whole and free can determine its own future. Artificial and forced relations will be replaced by natural and healthy co-operation. The pulling down of political barriers will give way to a wider interpretation of European integrity. Obviously, the bipolar strategic concept that has characterized our continent for decades is also fading away, and a new situation is emerging where each and every country has to reassess its security requirements. Hungary is not an exception to that either.

We strongly believe that long-lasting peace and stability cannot be built any more on the foundation of opposing military alliances. The direction of the European processes is pointing towards a co-operative security system based on common interests and shared democratic values. We envisage this system as the complex of all the organizations and treaties, and full respect for international legal and political obligations. The formal decision on the dismantling of the military organization of the Warsaw Treaty is only the beginning of a long road. The next stage is to be reached in 1992 at the Helsinki follow-up meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

(Mr. Tóth, Hungary)

It was this conviction that guided our activities at the CFE negotiations in Vienna. We consider that this Treaty puts an end to the era of confrontation and division and, together with the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, provides the conditions for a new approach to security in Europe.

The loosening of former ties must certainly not push Eastern Europe into becoming a potential source of instability. Naturally, the difficulties involved in establishing a market economy, the emergence of moral and political problems while transforming our societies into a truly democratic system, and also the historically inherited problem of national minorities might sometimes strain relations between these countries. Regional co-operation based on geographical proximity, equality and mutual interests has a significant role to play here. The Pentagonal Initiative or co-operation between Poland, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Hungary might serve as examples providing a framework for joint action in the most various fields.

In this spirit we are conducting bilateral negotiations with the other States parties to the Warsaw Treaty to review the agreements that constituted the basis of our relations and replace them with new instruments reflecting present European requirements. We also seek an equal partnership in the context of military security, but we strictly observe the right of every State to choose its own security arrangements.

I believe it is obvious from the statement of the Political Consultative Committee that this decision will have far-reaching effects in the relations between Hungary and its neighbours, in European co-operation and in a wider context as well. To analyse these effects and reassess the previous axioms is not a task to be accomplished in a fortnight. In our opinion, the decision to dismantle the military organization of the Warsaw Treaty will also entail consequences for the work of the Conference on Disarmament. It might affect the interpretation of certain issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, and I have no doubt that it will also stimulate some fresh thinking on whether the imaginary barrier between the different groups of countries in the Conference really has to be more solid than the Berlin Wall itself used to be.

In concluding my statement, and with reference to the recent statement of the distinguished Ambassador of Yugoslavia, I can only reiterate the readiness of my Government, expressed in the statement of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Hungary two weeks ago in the Conference on Disarmament, to co-operate in the bilateral, regional or wider global context with States wishing to solve problems related to the international arms trade.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Hungary for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador O'Sullivan.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (Australia): Mr. President, as this is the first occasion I have had to speak during your stewardship of our Conference, may I say how much we appreciate your efforts and the consistently practical and effective contribution of your delegation? Like my colleagues I would also say how pleased I am to acknowledge Mr. Akashi's presence with us today.

(Mr. O'Sullivan, Australia)

We are pleased to welcome back in the Public Gallery today the women who have gathered here, as they do each year, to mark International Women's Day and to devote four days to discussion and reflection on current issues related to our common endeavours for the promotion of international peace and security.

We pay particular homage to the organisers of this annual event, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Founded in April 1915, by women from belligerent and non-belligerent countries alike, in protest at the carnage of the First World War, the League is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations, still working actively for the promotion of peace today.

The conflict in the Gulf has thrown into stark relief the catastrophic consequences of armed conflict for peoples and the world in which they live. This war has brought with it shattering consequences for the environment which will take years, if not decades to repair.

The theme they will be addressing here in Geneva in 1991 thus takes on particular significance. Arms control and the environment represent two of the most critical issues of current concern to the international community and to its individual members. Developments in the field of arms and environment can also have a direct bearing on the third leg of the triad of issues of international significance today, that of development. Accordingly, their discussions will be of great interest to a wide audience.

The Gulf crisis reminds us again of the relative suddenness with which States find themselves propelled into resolving aggression and disputes by military means, while at the same time, and some may say paradoxically, working through bodies like the Conference on Disarmament to put into practice our commonly shared conviction that a stable world with fewer weapons will be a more secure and peaceful place.

A world governed by an increasing body of global rules for the progressive reduction or abolition of armaments will make a fundamental contribution to the promotion and maintenance of peace and stability. However, to be effectively implemented and respected, such rules must be based on principles of equal rights and obligations.

Women carry with them a long and often painful history of struggle for the attainment of equal rights and opportunities. In doing so, they have not shirked their responsibilities in taking on equal obligations.

An issue of particular concern to the Australian Government and on which we have made a number of statements in the United Nations, also together with New Zealand and Canada, is the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat.

Women's equality is a matter of basic human rights and social justice, as stated in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore one would expect the United Nations and organizations with close links to the United Nations to be in the vanguard of making these equal rights a reality. Unfortunately the structure of its Secretariat does not reflect such a role.

(Mr. O'Sullivan, Australia)

The joint Canada, Australia and New Zealand statement to the United Nations in New York in October 1990 stated:

> "The equal participation of women in the Secretariat is vital to the efficient running of this Organization. The Charter stipulates the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. This cannot be attained if the talents of important staff members are frustrated rather than developed. With women contributing only about 30 per cent of the Professional staff, and substantially less at higher levels, there can be no question that their talents are being under-utilized. If women are not included among the decision makers both the needs of women and their potential to contribute tend to be systematically neglected or ignored. For the sake of the effectiveness of the various United Nations programmes, women must be in the mainstream of the head office."

The most recent overall United Nations figures (in document A/45/541) bear out that women are still underrepresented in the total number of Professional staff. They now constitute almost 30 per cent of the Professional staff. Over the past 10 years there has been a rise of less than 1 per cent in the level of Professional women's representation. This is not a record to be proud of, keeping also in mind that progress has been mainly at the lower and middle levels. It will be a test of the United Nations bona fides to see whether these women will progress into the higher echelons over the next few years.

It is at the Director and above level that the Organization is most visible and where many of the important decisions are made. It is of great concern that women are not better represented here, including in the department of disarmament affairs. At the P-5 and at the P-4 level on the other hand, women are rather well represented in the DDA. We trust this bodes well for the future. In this context the General Assembly has urged the Secretary-General to accord priority to increasing to 25 per cent the participation rate of women in posts at the D-1 level and above within the overall participation rate of women in the 35 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995.

In Geneva we note that of the six Professional positions only one of them is held by a woman. This falls well short of the 30 per cent target the United Nations had set itself for 1990 in resolution 44/185 C, let alone the 35 per cent target the General Assembly has set for 1995 in its resolution 45/125 and does not reflect the overall level of female representation in the department of disarmament affairs.

The figures speak for themselves. Let me conclude my brief commentary by noting that the problems faced by women in the United Nations Secretariat are not unique. They are mirrored in civil services and other international organizations throughout the world. We are also aware that one of the inhibiting factors for a more equal male/female balance in Secretariat positions is the unwillingness of many United Nations Member States to field women as candidates in posts subject to geographical distribution. The responsibility for redressing the unequal situation of women in the United Nations and associated bodies therefore rests on all our shoulders. Australia is determined to continue to play its part in promoting this obligation which we collectively share as Member States and as officials.

(Mr. Calderón, Peru)

My delegation has taken note with great interest of the report submitted by the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events, contained in document CD/1065. Peru supports this eminently technical effort designed to put the finishing touches to a fundamental aspect of the future machinery for verification of the comprehensive nuclear test ban. And this is why it stresses the importance of avoiding the politicization of this Group, in order not to distort the important test under way. What the Conference would be well advised to do is consider to what extent and in what way the mandate of the Group of Scientific Experts can be improved upon so that its efforts properly fit in with the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on agenda item 1. Without complicating things, our efforts should be directed towards ensuring that the Group of Scientific Experts tackles other technical aspects also relating to verification.

Before concluding, I should like to place on record my country's gratitude to the Government of Austria for the valuable technical support that is making it possible for Peruvian experts to participate in the second technical test (GSETT-2). Due to the vagaries of geography, Peru has experience in this matter, aside from Lima's being the headquarters of the regional seismology centre (CERESIS). Hence the Austrian co-operation is highly opportune and much appreciated.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Peru for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other member wish to take the floor? I recognize the distinguished representative of Pakistan.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan): As I am addressing the Conference for the first time under your stewardship, Sir, may I say how happy we are to see you in the Chair and how confident that the work of the Conference will proceed positively and constructively under your customary distinction and excellence?

During the course of an earlier meeting, I was asked to undertake bilateral consultations on the subject of the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. I am happy to report that, during the course of these bilateral consultations, I have found general willingness and agreement that the process of informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament should start towards the end of our current session. A number of heads of delegation have also identified specific subjects that they would like to see discussed during these informal open-ended consultations. It is my own feeling that these ideas should be aired in the informal open-ended consultations themselves, so that the exercise remains fully transparent and so that all members have a chance to comment on them. The secretariat has indicated to me that a convenient slot for the first meeting of these informal open-ended consultations would be available at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 19 March 1991. I trust this will be agreeable to all our colleagues. Given the importance of the exercise, as well as the need for free, frank and transparent discussions, it is my hope that these informal open-ended consultations will draw the same personal interest on the part of heads of delegation as they did last year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Kamal, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. In view of the statement just made, may I ask the Conference whether there is any objection to having the informal open-ended consultations on the question of the improved and effective functioning of the Conference before the end of this session? I see none. Ambassador Kamal also indicated that a convenient time would be 10 a.m. on Tuesday 19 March, and that also seems to meet with the agreement of member States.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should now like to turn to another subject. You will recall that, at our last plenary meeting, I indicated my intention to put before the Conference for adoption the recommendation contained in paragraph 15 of the report of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events (CD/1065), concerning the dates of its next session. In that connection, I wish to report to you that further consultations are needed before we take up this question again. I shall keep you informed of the results of those consultations.

You will also recall that, at our last plenary meeting, I circulated the draft of a letter that I would address, as President of the Conference, to the Director-General of the International Maritime Satellite Organization, inviting that organization to send a representative to the next session of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts. I noted at that time that, if no objections were received before this plenary meeting, the letter would then be sent. No objections have been received by the secretariat and, accordingly, I shall proceed with the dispatch of the communication as suggested, the only change being the deletion of the reference to the dates indicated for the next session of the Ad Hoc Group, which as I just said are to be the subject of further consultations.

The secretariat has circulated, at my request, the timetable of meetings to be held next week by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies. As usual the timetable is merely indicative and can be changed if necessary. On that understanding I suggest that we adopt the informal paper. I call on the distinguished representative of the Soviet Union.

Mr. BATSANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): I have a very brief comment on the tentative timetable of our meetings for next week. As Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, I wish to say that in the Committee, we have not yet finished assigning the time allocated to us among the groups and other machinery. So, with respect to the total amount of time allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, of course I have no objections, nor do I have any objections to any of the other entries in this timetable, but I wish to say that this afternoon we will be having a meeting of the expanded bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee, while tomorrow there will be a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee itself, at which there may be some minor adjustments made.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Batsanov for his statement. As I indicated, the timetable is merely indicative and can be changed, so I still believe that on that understanding, and in view of what was just said by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, we can adopt the informal timetable. Is there any objection? I see none.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As agreed in the timetable of meetings for this week, immediately after this plenary meeting the Conference will hold its second informal meeting devoted to the substance of agenda item 2. I have no other business for today, and I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 14 March, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.